

CEREMONIES OF MOURNING

764 The grave is dug with knives, sticks, and finger-nails, and the earth scooped out with a wooden dish (*teve*). In one instance a number of young men acted as grave-diggers; the deceased (a woman) stood in the various relationships of *aja*, *tata*, *imboti*, *du*, and *bovatu* to them, and they came from six different villages. It seems clear, therefore, that the function of grave-digger does not belong to any particular relatives.

764 152 The body, whether of man or woman, is usually carried from the house to the grave by women. Many crowd around, and when the body is laid down in line with the grave there is a veritable scrum of mourners about it. Each is wailing or dirging independently, and to a listener at close quarters the atmosphere seems to be fairly dancing with the discord, though at a distance their combined voices resolve themselves into a rich monotone. The lamentation of the adult takes a lyrical turn in which extempore words are chanted loudly and with some semblance of rhythm, but I do not forget hearing the young son of a dead woman repeatedly scream, '*Aja, aja!*' as if perhaps his grief were too great even for the restraint of a dirge.

764 537 775 When for a few moments comparative quietness has been secured, an elderly man, holding in one hand a spear and in the other a bunch of ornaments, stands by the corpse and, pressing upon its feet with one of his own, as if to rouse (*ajari*) or attract its attention, he declaims what we might call a valediction. Of this I have several renderings which agree in essence but differ sufficiently to show that this farewell address is not a set form. The gist of it is as follows: 'Go now to a good place, not an evil one; go to the road of the sunshine, not to the road of the rains; go where there are neither mosquitoes nor march-flies, but where there are pigs in plenty and taro in plenty. Send us pigs and send us taro, and we shall make a feast in your honour, and pay-

from the superincumbent earth. In the hilly country of the Diron tribe there is a system of cave burial which is foreign to the Orokaiva at large. The body is here wrapped in bark cloth and encased in a roughly meshed structure of cane. This, supported on a pole between two trestles or props, is set up in some inaccessible cave or fissure in the rocks, and allowed to decompose and fall. I am told that when the package has fallen to pieces and only the skeleton is left, the valuable *hau* or ornaments which were attached to the body are retrieved.

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ment to those who have mourned for you.' The 'road of the sunshine' (*jji-deita*) was said (when I asked where it was) to be in the east, and the 'road of the rains' in the west, where there are great downpours on the slopes of the Central Range; but it may be said very emphatically that there is no idea of a general Paradise or Elysium in the east, but only of various scattered *sovai-ta-na* or 'villages of the spirits', which are usually in fairly close proximity to the villages of the living. The contrast between sunshine and rain really points to the desired contrast between cheerfulness and gloom, not to that between east and west.

The spear and the handful of ornaments are presented—only in form—to the dead, and he is adjured to present them in turn to the other *sovai* whom he is to meet. He is told to announce his name to them, and the name of his father, to call upon them 'to make way for him, to blow the trumpet, beat the drums, and prepare a feast', and he will hand them these as, it would appear, conciliatory gifts.

764 When this address is concluded the body is lowered into
152 the grave. The women who are still clinging about it must first be dragged or thrown aside, and this is done by one or two young men with a roughness which is not inexcusable. The grave is only partly filled, and the earth stamped down. In the shallow depression which remains the mourners throw themselves down—as many as can find a place—and veritably wallow in their grief. They almost jostle for position, so much so that I have seen a bereaved husband compelled to push and shoulder his way through a throng of mourners to secure a place at the grave of his wife.

Mourning Seclusion

765 It is customary among all the tribes for a widow to go into seclusion for some time after her husband's death. In certain tribes the widower is also secluded under similar circumstances, but as this latter custom is not universal I shall in the following section deal solely with the seclusion of the widow.

When the excitement—for such it is—of the funeral has died away, the widow (*doru*) of the deceased is left, perhaps

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765 with one or two other women, at his grave. Formerly the
 [764] grave was under the house of the deceased; now by Govern-
 ment regulation it is in the bush at some distance from the
 village. It is natural that the natives should do their best to
 evade this regulation, because the custom of burial under
 the house is no doubt based on sentiment. Informants
 765 repeatedly state that they dislike burying their dead at a
 152 distance because they are sad or 'belly-sore'. I have also
 heard that they dislike the thought of a grave neglected and
 overgrown; but the principal idea is, as informants have
 stated it to be, that the living cannot bear the parting with
 the dead. They cling as long as they can even to his in-
 animate presence. Sometimes in these days the dead are
 actually buried in the village, though if the fact is discovered
 or betrayed, the mourners are likely to work out their
 sorrow in gaol. More commonly the difficulty is overcome
 by a rather pathetic subterfuge. The grave is placed in the
 bush not far from the village, and a small house is built over
 it in which the widow secludes herself, just as in former
 times she would have been secluded over her husband's
 grave in her own house. When a Government patrol
 draws near, the grave shelter is of course empty.

765 The widow's seclusion is a long one, and the greater part
 of it she spends in her own house, i.e. that of her deceased
 husband. It is not clear when she is transferred from the
 grave shelter to the house, though it appears that this may be
 made the occasion of a feast. (Regarding this feast I have
 very little information, but it is of minor consequence at
 any rate, and cannot, I think, be regarded as a regular
 feature of the cycle of mortuary ceremonies.) While in the
 shelter the widow sleeps actually in the grave, above the
 corpse of her husband, which is covered only with a shallow
 layer of earth. I am told that she will from time to time
 765 burrow with her fingers in the earth, and whenever she dis-
 715 covers some maggots (*kanyeni*) she will carry them off and
 deposit them in one place in the bush nearby. Here they
 accumulate and disappear, being supposedly transformed
 into the *sovai* of the deceased. I do not know whether this
 belief and practice (which I found among the Aiga) are of

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general distribution. At any rate they illustrate only one of the theories as to the transformation of human beings into *sovai*. It is after this disagreeable rite has been performed that the widow moves from the grave shelter to the house, or in former times, we may assume, from the ground under the house to the living room above. 765 775

It is the general rule for the widow to be secluded in the house of her husband, though in some instances it appears that the house in which the deceased lived is tabu, being avoided on account of fear. But such cases are evidently exceptional. In the event of evacuation it was not the custom to destroy the house but to leave it, probably surrounded by a tabu string. A house is left when it is thought to be 'haunted' by a *sovai*, and it is not only in a house of recent death that this supposed situation can arise. I have known a young married pair abandon a house because their baby was continually ailing, a fact which they attributed to the presence of a *sovai*. Similarly a whole village may be deserted if its inhabitants get the idea into their heads that it is haunted by malignant spirits. 765 784 775

It is only upon the widow, not upon the other women-folk of the deceased, that rigid seclusion is enforced; though a mother will voluntarily remain for a long time at the grave of her child. In some tribes the widower undergoes seclusion. This is so, I understand, in the Wasida, Sangara, Sauaha, Yega, and Tain-Daware tribes. Among the Aiga and the Binandele he is not secluded. Of the other tribes I have no reliable information. 765

During seclusion the widow (or the widower) is engaged in making the mourning jacket *baja*—so called because it is made of *baja* (*coix lacrimae* seeds, or Job's Tears). She has no other work to do. She receives frequent friendly visits from the women of the village, who make her presents of food and assist her to make the *baja*, for which the seeds are gathered by her son or some relative of the deceased. She is not seen by the villagers, and her voice is supposed to remain unheard. Indeed, while living for some months in a village rest-house I was completely unaware that a widow was secluded in the house opposite, and that [292] [431]

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It is finally wrapped up with some of the fat and entrails and buried. In other cases it is hung up in the garden of the deceased and there left to rot in the sun and rain. This garden has been allowed to fall to rack and ruin since his death: none of its products have been eaten, though the young taro shoots may be transplanted to a new plot. In the Wasida dialect the word *kisa* was applied to such a garden. It appears that in this case the neglect of the garden was less a self-denying tabu than due to an actual fear of evil consequences—such as sore eyes, tooth decay, skinniness—if its products were eaten. And it is noteworthy that such effects would be felt only by the immediate relatives of the dead. It was possible, in fact, to make an exchange of gardens, so that the bereaved relatives would not be left without resources, the *kisa* garden being passed over to one who would take no harm from it, and another being given in exchange to the relatives of the dead. The evil potency of the *kisa* garden is apparently attributed to the malignant spirits of the dead—an explanation for which I have the direct testimony of one informant, although in many other cases it remained inexplicit. It is in keeping with the belief (which is a basis for a system of divination, cf. p. 281) that the dead revisit or haunt their gardens, and in general with the fear which the Orokaiva feels for his deceased relatives *qua sovai*. Among the various mourning tabus which have come to my notice, however, this, viz. the forbidding of the garden to the relatives of the deceased, was the only instance in which the motive was apparently one of fear. All the others were rather manifestations of sorrow.

The Naterari, or Tabu Post

The fourth major mortuary ceremony is a dance, which among the Aiga and Binandele is accompanied by a dramatic performance. The fifth is the ritual disposal of certain materials used in the fourth ceremony. Now I do not believe that the dance and drama are purely and wholly a mortuary ceremony, but that they are at least partly so appears from the facts that the dead are called upon to witness the proceedings, and that, when the proceedings are over, certain

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substitute for the concrete thing. Perhaps the phrase 'spiritual substitute' would make the best definition. Whenever the native thinks of this spiritual substitute in the abstract and feels it necessary to give it a name, he, very naturally and suitably, extends to it the word *asisi*, which means 'shadow' or 'reflection', and thus affords a very close parallel.

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Elsewhere, particularly in the Taro Cult, I have translated *asisi* by 'spirit' (as I have translated *sovai* by 'spirit of the dead'). This is only, of course, an approximation, and the word has been used, at the sacrifice of some accuracy, simply to make the subject more readable. That is the only defence I can offer for the use of a term, which in our language is so fluid and ill-defined. And it may be as well to emphasize at this point that some of the accepted implications of 'spirit' do not belong to the concept of an *asisi*. I cannot, for instance, discover from my informants that the *asisi* is regarded as an entity separate from but residing in the body to which it belongs. It is not a 'breath of life', a vital principle, or an animating essence. Such ideas are, I believe, in advance of Orokaiva philosophy as we find it. Accordingly I have avoided the word 'soul' as being rather more unsuitable for a translation than 'spirit'. No informant has ever given me a theory of survival after death other than this, that the *embo be*, 'real man', becomes a *sovai*. At any rate it may be confidently stated that there is no conception of a vital principle or 'soul' which inhabits the body but survives it; and such a meaning cannot be attached to the word *asisi*.

To repeat a conclusion, therefore, the *asisi* is the native's name for a spiritual manifestation of anything; or for an immaterial self which co-exists with but is separable from the concrete self; or, in other words, whenever anything functions apart from its concrete self, it does so by means of a spiritual substitute which is called its *asisi*.

Asisi of the Dead

The word *asisi*, which is thus seen to be of very wide meaning, may stand not only for a manifestation of the living, but also for a manifestation of the dead, i.e. a ghost, visible or invisible. But it must be made clear that in proper

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774 usage *asisi* is not wholly synonymous with the being that
 715 survives death, viz. the *sovai*, though there is some confusion between the two words. Such confusion is largely due to the recent movement known as the Taro Cult which has been dealt with at length in another report.¹ The movement originated on the River Mambare, where its founders believed themselves, or affected to be, possessed by the *asisi* of the actual taro plant. It is not necessary here to describe the ritual, doctrines, and physical manifestations of the cult, but merely to draw attention to the significant change which it has undergone in the course of its dissemination, and the bearing which this change has had on the meaning of the word *asisi*. Near what we may call the dispersion centre of the cult, viz. the neighbourhood of the Mambare mouth, its exponents still affect to be possessed by the taro *asisi*. On the other hand, in the great majority of the whole division through which the cult has spread, its exponents say they are possessed by the spirits of the dead. This is quite in keeping with old belief, and merely indicates that a new and somewhat outlandish cult has relapsed into a form more acceptable to the old-established beliefs of the Orokaiva. But together with other features of ritual the Taro Cult has spread abroad a certain distinctive vocabulary of terms; and among these terms is *asisi*. The consequence is that *asisi* is now frequently used as synonymous with the spirits of the dead by whom the majority of Taro Men think they are possessed. I have been assured by reliable witnesses, however, that this general and regular application of the word *asisi* to the beings who survive death is new-fangled and attributable to the Taro Cult. The old word is *sovai*, which, in the taro jargon, has been supplanted by *asisi*. It is not to be assumed that *asisi* was never used formerly for the spirit of the dead as well as the spirit of the living, but it was not wholly synonymous with the beings who survived death. A fundamental difference exists between the two words. *Asisi* normally stands for an image of or substitute for some other and more concrete reality; whereas a *sovai*, whatever its form, does not represent anything; it exists by itself.

¹ 'Taro Cult' in *Orokaiva Magic*.

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NATIVE ideas regarding the life after death, although involved in great confusion, are, nevertheless, easier to deal with than those which concern the *asisi*; for despite many inconsistencies they come near to being explicit, and there is less of inference required in their description.

The 'Sovai', or Being who Survives Death

It will be understood that the living man possesses an *asisi*; he neither is nor possesses a *sovai*, but when he dies he becomes a *sovai*. That is to say *sovai* means 'the being who survives death', or 'the living form into which death converts a human being'. (In accordance with the general rule of this book the forms of the Aiga dialect have been used. The being who survives death is known by a variety of names:

Aiga	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Sovai</i>
Binandele	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Binei</i>
Wasida	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Embahi</i>
Hunjara	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Siango</i>

but although there is continual diversity of belief regarding details, the main concepts, as far as they can be abstracted, remain constant throughout the tribes. In order to avoid confusion, therefore, the word *sovai* will be used exclusively in this chapter.)

The *sovai* will be found to take a variety of forms, including those of fiends or hobgoblins, which probably have their origin merely in fear and imagination but are nevertheless classed in native terminology with *sovai*, or spirits of the dead. Such characters, besides existing vaguely in the imagination, are constantly told of in Orokaiva legends, and it appears that some of these 'legendary' *sovai* may be conceived of as still existing and retaining their personality and attributes. Cases of legendary or personal *sovai* are, however, so few as to be almost negligible.

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775 Apart from the very faint hint which these last may give us there is nothing to suggest a deity or any supernatural being of independent existence, least of all a high-god. I do not know of any cosmogony, and there is no attribution of divine powers to the phenomena of nature. On the whole it will be found that Orokaiva religion concerns itself primarily with the spirits of the dead.

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In any one tribe the beliefs regarding the *sovai* are found to be confused and conflicting to the last degree, and it will be as well for the sake of clarity to set down several conceptions immediately.

(1) The *sovai* is sometimes conceived of as immaterial but retaining human characteristics. (2) It is also conceived of as taking the concrete form of beast, bird, reptile, or fish. (3) It is also conceived of as a semi-human monster of altogether frightful disposition inhabiting the bush; or in this case it might be nearer the truth to say that there are imaginary monsters (fiends, hobgoblins) to whom the name *sovai* is extended, and who are thus identified with spirits of the dead. (4) Fourthly, there are a few instances in which the *sovai* are known by personal names and, apart from their constant appearance in legends, are thought of as still actually existing.

No native, I fancy, would fail to endorse any of the above propositions, nor does he find any difficulty in holding all these beliefs simultaneously. He pictures the *sovai* as ghost, animal, or hobgoblin, and it depends entirely upon his mood or the subject of the conversation which of the three pictures will be on view. It is not to be supposed that he would make a rigorous choice and so definitely and permanently make up his mind as to the real nature of the *sovai*. His conception of it is as kaleidoscopic as his emotions, and changes form and colour as he ranges between affection, distaste, and fear.

Transition from Living Man to 'Sovai'

It is definitely asserted that a man becomes a *sovai* at death, but there seems to be no satisfactory theory regarding the transition. It is very tempting for a European to put a

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construction on the matter and say that the native must suppose the *asisi* of the living man to leave his body at death and survive in the form of a *sovai*. But, unfortunately, I have never heard such an interpretation from a native, nor do I feel confident that his conception of an *asisi* would allow of it. Save for one or two fanciful explanations which I have heard from isolated witnesses and which will be mentioned presently, we must allow that the native simply takes the transition for granted, as he does so many other abstruse happenings.

On cessation of breathing (*beb*)—about which the native holds no psychic theory—the man is dead, and his *sovai* is hovering somewhere in the environs of the village. It is interesting to note that in native belief a man may die and come to life again. Upon the appearance of coma, which is interpreted as death, the friends and relatives set up a very noisy lamentation. The *sovai* is lurking on the outskirts of the village, but may be so affected by compassion as to return; whereupon the corpse is reanimated. In such a case I have heard the *sovai* spoken of as *sovai isapo*, 'the small *sovai*', but no explanation was offered of how it departed and returned.

To show how singularly confused and, in a sense, ill-made are the beliefs regarding the transition from living man to *sovai*, I quote a case which, despite its rather fabulous complexion, purports, nevertheless, to be true. A man named Hosisi (an exceptionally good informant who told me this story himself) was going to fish in the river. Meanwhile a very old man named Divinopa lay sick in the village. On the way Hosisi saw a cuscus which he immediately realized was the *sovai* of Divinopa, recognizing it, as he explained, by the whiteness of its fur which so resembled the white hair of the old man. Hosisi called the latter's son to his assistance, and together they succeeded in catching the cuscus. They addressed it affectionately as 'grandfather' or 'old man', and took it with them to the village, where they induced it to eat for the next two days. Meanwhile they watched Divinopa, feeling that the appearance of the *sovai* cuscus was a sign that his end was close at hand. On the

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775 third day both he and the animal died, and were buried together. In response to a question my informant said that Divinopa's *sovai* still existed as a cuscus. A case such as this can hardly be made to square with the general belief that the living man becomes a *sovai* at death. One can only lay down the generally accepted doctrine and dismiss a case of this sort as a cheerful aberration.

775 The two ensuing theories are somewhat isolated, i.e. they were not sufficiently verified by being repeated at other times
764 and in other places, so that they probably do not amount to general beliefs. The corpse of an Orokaiva is wrapped in a mat and laid in a coffin-like structure of wood, to which a number of sticks laid crosswise and lengthwise constitute a lid. According to a group of informants on the River Gira these parts of the 'coffin' (*detemba*) are in some manner animated by the stench (*opu*) of the corpse as it decomposes in the grave, and the mat becomes a cuscus, the framework of the coffin becomes a crocodile, the cross-sticks of the lid become a pig, and the long sticks become snakes. It is worth noting that these informants gave 'one man, one *sovai*' as a rule—with which their theory seems hardly in accord.

The other theory has already been mentioned in another connexion (p. 216). It is that the maggots, which appear somewhat inexplicably from the corpse and disappear just as mysteriously, have turned into the *sovai*. (In the one or two cases where this theory was put forward it appeared that the *sovai* took the form of a certain bird, though I do not know whether this latter point is essential to the theory.) How widely the belief itself may be held I am unable to say, though it cannot be denied that there is a certain amount of plausibility and even ingenuity about it.

Except for such somewhat fanciful theories we can only say that the native simply believes that the *sovai* comes into existence on the death of a human being, and that he is content to leave the method of transition unexplained.

The Forms of 'Sovai'

775 When a man dies his *sovai*, as we have seen, is thought to be present in some form about the village. Thus it is that

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the mourners at a funeral may be startled by any noise in the surrounding bush, the breaking of a twig for instance, which they will attribute to the *sovai* of the deceased. Approaching a village where a death had occurred in the early morning, I once heard a hissing noise in the scrub close to the track. I imagined that it was probably the hissing of a snake, but when I asked the native who accompanied me he answered in rather matter-of-fact tones that it was the *sovai* of the man who had died that morning. When I told the villagers some time afterwards they immediately gave the same explanation, and that without any collusion. It seems, then, that the first idea of the *sovai* is of something quite ethereal and invisible which haunts the village and betrays its presence by movements or noises. And the *sovai* may long remain in this immaterial form. It is thought sometimes to haunt houses and afflict their inmates with sickness. It also visits the gardens, and both here and in the villages may be seen small platforms (*barau*) of food offerings, sometimes with miniature ladders of the most fragile construction to assist the *sovai* in climbing up (Plate XXXVa). [782]

But the *sovai* may appear, more or less disembodied, in human form. When one evening my boys were telling each other spookish stories, one of them, an Orokaiva, suddenly scrambled across the hut and sat there trembling in every limb. He had looked out into the darkness and seen the figure of a man recently dead in the village: what first drew his attention, he said, was the smell of death which attached to the *sovai*. Such hallucinations are of common occurrence. One hears of a mother who was mourning the death of her daughter, when she looked up and beheld the girl dancing before her in all her finery. Following the girl, who danced backwards into the bush, she suddenly found herself surrounded by *sovai* in human form, whom she thought to be hostile warriors. In such cases, of course, the *sovai* is an apparition or ghost in the usual sense of the word. So also the dead constantly reappear to dreamers in their familiar living form. Again, in the legends the *sovai* are eminently human though sometimes betrayed by some small evidence of death; as when the youth slain in fight returned in *sovai* [785, 787]

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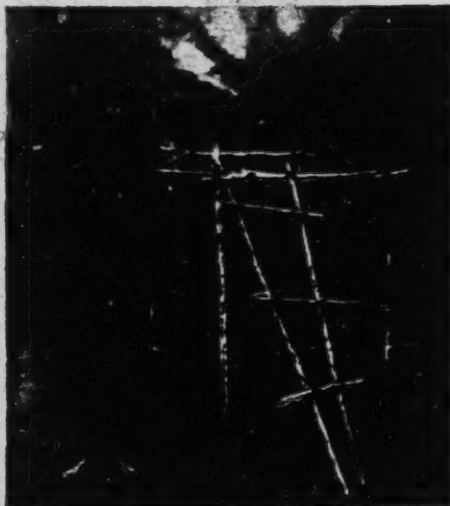
- 775 form to his sweetheart, but was detected by a trickle of
787 blood from his ear; or when the *sovai* woman revisited her husband and would have passed off for living had he not noticed the earth caked in her nostrils, and so suspected that she had risen from the grave.

775 Leaving this conception of the *sovai* as a ghost, visible or
825 invisible, we may pass on to another with which it seems completely at variance: the *sovai* is supposed to take the form of some creature of the bush or river. No native has ever maintained that this form is subsequent, i.e. that the *sovai* is first a ghost and afterwards an animal, bird, or reptile, though there is little doubt that the ghostly form is thought of first when an individual has recently died. The general fact is that a native sometimes pictures the *sovai* in one way and sometimes in another. A great variety of creatures may be *sovai*—wallabies, cuscus, pigs, snakes, crocodiles, lizards, frogs, eels, bats, birds, and fishes; but it will be understood that of these species many members are normal or ordinary animals and nothing more, while others are *sovai*. The latter are commonly detected by some queerness or abnormality. For instance, if a snake were very active and writhed over much it would be called a *sovai*, simply, of course, because its slayers were startled or horrified into thinking it such. A lean and ugly cuscus, or a bush-pig that looked unusually rakish would excite the abhorrence of its captors, and a careful man would refrain from eating it. Sometimes the classification as *sovai* is retrospective. When a man falls ill he looks about him for possible causes, and recollects that he recently ate a flying-fox: he draws the conclusion that the flying-fox was a *sovai*. In several instances that came to my notice it was some association with the deceased that had caused the creature to be classed as *sovai*: when for instance a snake had been seen emerging from the grave shelter of a woman recently dead.

There is very little to say about the behaviour of the *sovai* animal. I was once told that thievish men turned into thievish animals such as pigs, rats, and flying-foxes—in which, however, there was no hint of retributive reincarnation but merely an association of ideas. The *sovai* creature

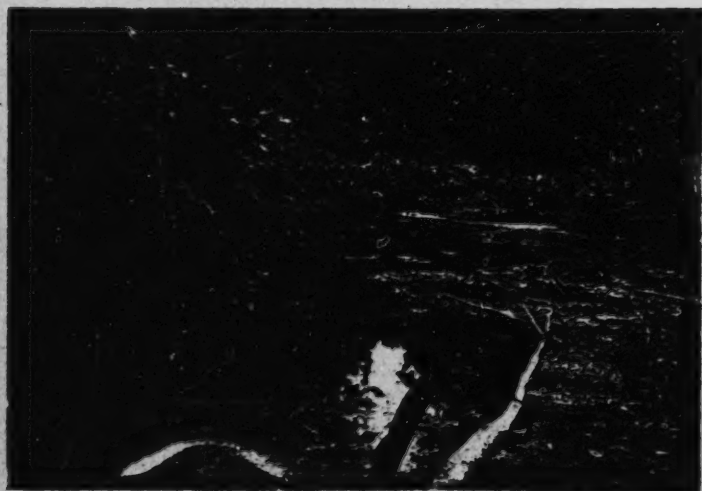
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OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23



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(a) A Harau with Ladder for the Sawai



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(b) The Pool Monoda

PLATE XXXV

[facing p. 272]

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825 is naturally regarded with fear and abhorrence: the case of the cuscus quoted above (p. 269) is one of the few in which it does not appear to possess a malignant and dangerous character. But it is not easily distinguished from the ordinary example of the same species, and it has often been killed and eaten before the difference is discovered.

[787] This killing of the *sovai* animal raises the question of what we may call its constitution. It is obviously of a nature sufficiently corporeal to be killed and eaten. What is its relation to the deceased with whom it is identified? It would be tempting to suppose that the *sovai* in immaterial form possessed, or entered into, the animal as the evil spirits entered into the Gadarene swine. But I have never heard such an explanation from a native, and I do not know that we can infer that such a theory is in the back of his mind: on the other hand I have been assured that the animal is the *sovai*. Nevertheless, it survives what may be called the second death. A simple illustration of this belief is afforded by the following incident. A bush-pig found rooting a garden was speared and killed. That night the owner of the garden (who happened to be my informant) was visited in a dream by his deceased elder brother, who explained that the pig was himself: he had been hungry and had come to his brother's garden for food (by which news the owner was deeply affected and refrained from eating any of the pig).

The theory that best squares with this belief is not that the *sovai* is only an immaterial entity which can enter a concrete body, but that it is an entity of exceedingly variable nature, sometimes immaterial and sometimes material, which can change from a mere invisible breath to the solid body of a pig, or from that again to the appearance of a human being. Such a power of metamorphosis is often met with in the tales of *sovai*. When, for instance, a girl was supposedly kidnapped by *sovai*, her rescuers at length found her in the bush sitting amid a circle of them; when the rescuers made bold to approach, the *sovai* became birds and flew away. Or again, in one village the mourners found themselves after nightfall in the garden of the deceased and

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- 775 engaged in pitched battle with a large number of *sovai*; but
825 whenever they brought down one of their opponents it would turn into a wallaby or a bird and make off.

One may mention at this point several variant forms of the *sovai*. The fire-fly (*navi*) is very commonly regarded as a *sovai* form; sometimes more fancifully it is said that the fire-flies are the eyeballs of the dead. Again, the phosphorescent fungi *himbaja* may be *sovai*, though, of course, they are not always so, and little boys will play with them quite fearlessly, fixing them as luminous disks to their foreheads at night time. Again, the *sovai* may take the form of the *siribo*, i.e. the nest of the termite in a tree, which for some reason always has an uncanny suggestion to an Orokaiva. Again the meteor *bara* has been referred to in my hearing as a *sovai*, though I do not believe this to be an important or a general belief.

775 One variant, or rather specific, form of the *sovai* is, however, of great interest. When a man has been slain in fight he becomes a *diroga*, and although the actual form or forms of the *diroga* have never been accurately defined in my hearing, they all have this much in common that they are *i-sovai*—'upper' or 'on top' *sovai*—i.e. they do not belong to the earth or the stream, but flit about in the upper air, where they are sometimes heard to whistle as they pass. This singular, but apparently very general, belief has formed the groundwork of one of the variants of the Taro Cult, and a fuller description of the subject may be seen in the report on that movement.¹

We may now pass to the third general form in which the *sovai* may appear, viz. that of a fiend or hobgoblin, or of any monstrous creature that inhabits the bush and is liable to attack the lonely wanderer. Various imaginative descriptions are given of the *sovai* in this character. They may have hairy bodies and long fangs; several have pictured them with eyes in the back of their heads; one informant who saw a *sovai* in his boyhood recalled with horror the unnatural skinniness of its arms and legs. It is in this form that the spirits of the dead are represented to the initiates among the

¹ 'The Taro Cult' in *Orokaiva Magic*, pp. 68-72.

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southern Orokaiva (*vide* Chapter XII; among the southern tribes they are called *embabi* or *siango*). They are supposed to pursue their victims, biting and clawing them, and it is with threats of this kind that the initiates are supposedly reduced to terror. 775

As fiend or hobgoblin the *sovai* appears in a number of cases which deserve a fuller description than it is possible to give them here. They are cases in which an individual under the influence of some mental aberration 'takes to the bush' under the impression that he has been seized or kidnapped by a *sovai*. We have, for instance, the case of a youth who was missing during the day and found at evening with cuts on his cheek and hand and traces of earth on his face and body. He offered the explanation that he was taken by a *sovai*, who caused the wounds by biting him. No one hesitated to believe him, though, as he was accustomed to fits of violence and was known to fall into the fire on occasion, we should probably be right in supposing him to be epileptic. 828

There is another case which may perhaps be diagnosed simply as one of sleep-walking. A man named Ogomeni was discovered to be missing one night, and a search party discovered him sitting on the branch of a tree whence he gave them muffled answers to their calls, and from which he was helped down in a half-awake condition. On another occasion the same man was spearing fish when suddenly the poised spear was snatched out of his hand from behind, and he was carried off in a swoon. A search party eventually found him lying covered with leaves, and not far from home. His explanation was that he had been seized by a *sovai*, and fully accepting this as a fact his rescuers tied a liana to his belt on the way home to prevent a repetition of the capture, and once safely in his house he allowed his wife to make him fast by means of the liana to one of the floor joists. Ogomeni seemed a perfectly rational man, and it should be emphasized that the precautions of his wife and friends were not meant to keep him in his place but were levelled against the *sovai*.

It is not necessary to multiply instances. It is true that 775

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- 715 some of these disappearances come under suspicion of fake, some men pretending to have been in association with the *sovai* for the purposes of sorcery or magic, and one case that came to my notice seemed like deliberate kidnap and holding to ransom. But such examples of trickery are merely taking advantage of the popular belief that the bush is peopled by malignant creatures or fiends known as *sovai*, who are always liable to seize and carry off the lonely wanderer.

115 It is at this stage that we may briefly consider certain
113 beings who belong mainly to Orokaiva legends, but who, nevertheless, continue to have a vague existence in popular imagination. The legends (*bibi*; Binandele *kiki*) are full of characters known as *sovai*. These are commonly anthropomorphic, and although their dispositions vary, they are more often than not ridiculous or hateful. The Orokaiva, who possess a fine body of legends and fables, are quite alive to the difference between fact and fiction, or between their real beliefs and their fanciful stories, so that while one may quote a legend as illustrating any particular conception, it is, of course, not possible to assume that the legends always embody true belief. When, therefore, a native retells the tale of a well-known legendary character—Korevaja, Hovepakutota, Egovagova, to mention a few such—he does not necessarily believe that such a character ever existed except in fiction, much less that it is still in existence. In accordance with their general attributes he classifies these as *sovai*, and dismisses the matter from his mind.

Yet, despite this general attitude, we come upon sporadic instances in which these legendary *sovai* are spoken of as still existing. The instances that have come to my notice are so few that I will, as briefly as possible, set them all down.

(1) Totoima was the man-monster who formerly decimated the Orokaiva and remained invincible until two youths obtained possession of his detachable tusks, and thus having him at their mercy killed him. He is commonly regarded as no more than legendary, or as an historical being who passed out of existence when the two youths killed him. Yet a man of the River Gira (with which Totoima is specially associated) assured me that it was the custom for

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a warlike party to call upon Totoima (as a mighty slayer) to precede them, and fall upon their foes in spirit (*asisi*), after which they would go and deliver their own attack in the flesh. 775 773

(2) Jappi Jappi Tururu is the subject of a long tale in which, although an old hag of particularly odious habits, she figures as an invariably successful huntress. A pig-hunting magician who is possessed of certain medicines and who receives visits from the *asisi* of bush-pigs, is in the habit of calling on Jappi in terms which may be translated as follows: 'O Jappi, I go forth into the bush to spear a pig; grant me a pig and make it come near me; I go now in search of one, and having found it I will soon return.' The man who originated this ritual gave it out that Jappi once conducted his spirit into the bush where she gave him the pig medicine, and instructed him how to proceed.

(3) Moraralau was accredited with the origin of the taro. He lived alone, and was eyeless, earless, noseless—in fact devoid of any bodily orifice or member—until visited by a woman who obtained the taro from him and at the same time made a man of him. After this Moraralau fled to a cave where he baffled every attempt at capture. My informants said that his *asisi* still dwelt in the cave. When a man plants taro he may ejaculate 'Moraralau!' (though it was not stated that this was an appeal to him to make the plant grow).

(4) Kokowaio is identified with the 'floating island' on lake Embi, i.e. with the cohering mass of water plants which is sometimes to be seen floating on the surface of the lake. The legend is, that Kokowaio (sometimes represented as female, sometimes as male) rescued, by taking on to her back, a boy and girl, the sole survivors of a flood which led to the formation of lake Embi. Now Kokowaio exercises some sort of control over the lake, which is generally regarded as a place full of danger, except for men of the Umondaha clan, to which it belongs. When, in company with Mr. Ashton, the Assistant Resident Magistrate of the district, I voyaged across the waters to visit the floating island on an extempore raft, our escort was apprehensive of the wind

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- 775 which Kokowaio might send if he were displeased, and
773 continually hailed him with assurances that our intentions
were harmless, as if to ask for consideration. Mr. Wurth,
the Resident Magistrate, had a similar experience, and his
attendant explained that 'he was telling the waters of Embi
not to be wild as he was only taking his master to see the
island. . . . Had he not done so the canoe would have
capsized'.¹ It remains very uncertain what form Kokowaio
takes in native imagination beyond his association with the
floating island.

- 775 Mr. Leo Flint, who in the course of magisterial work has
given a good deal of study to the Orokaiva, names several
of these personal *sovai*. He writes:

'The Bines, who are alleged to have the greatest powers are—Koi, who informs the people of the name of the necromancer who caused the death of a certain person; the Umbubuka, who walks the road at night; the Owadegoari, who controls the spirit of children who die in infancy. Owadegoari is credited with having a tail, and lives in the sago swamp. The legend of the tail is that it has grown from the umbilical cord of infants who have died shortly after birth, or in the uterus.'²

I have met with only the last mentioned in my own inquiries, and the version which I received being somewhat different, is worth recording. *Hovatu-koiari* (to use the Aiga form) does not stand in this version for a single personal *sovai* who controls the spirits of children dying in infancy, but for the spirits of the children themselves. The word means literally 'after birth (*hovatu*)—bury (*koiari*)', and the spirit of the still-born or aborted child survives as a little creature inhabiting the sago swamp. It is a foot or so high, and has a long tail which, as Mr. Flint was told, originates from the navel string. When the *hovatu-koiari* walk the tail drags behind, but when the little creatures sit down to scrape sago it is thrown over the shoulder and hangs in front. They are to be seen and heard occasionally singing a plaintive song in time to the beat of their sago-scrappers. 'Why did our mothers throw us away?', they say.

¹ *Annual Report*, 1922-3, p. 25.

² *Ibid.*, 1920-1, p. 49.

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'Had they but kept us we might have been good children who could work and make sago for them.'

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Destination of Sovai

Where beliefs as to the nature of *sovai* are so confused and indefinite we need not expect to find a carefully formulated doctrine as to their habitat or destination. Nightbound in a lonely place, a native would feel positive that the *sovai* were ubiquitous, and if they abounded in one place more than another it would be in his own vicinity. But when his fears were calmed, he could expound some more specific theories, albeit not entirely consistent.

In the first place the *sovai* are felt to haunt the village they lived in as men. I have already given evidence of this belief in relation to the ghostly form of the *sovai* (*vide* pp. 270-2), and it appears that this haunting may be more than merely temporary. There is a custom called *peni*, i.e. 'gift-offering', in which a number of young men do a round of the village carrying a pig on a pole or some cooked food on a dish. Beating their drums as they go, they pause at every house and lay the pig for a moment on the verandah platform, or leave there a morsel of cooked food. This ceremony is a placation of the *sovai* which are thought to haunt the houses. Sometimes it is not the actual village, but the neighbouring bush that is inhabited by the *sovai*. Of this idea the most interesting illustration is the custom of *jage* or hailing, in which the *sovai*, being called by name, gives answer in a long-drawn inarticulate cry from the concealment of the forest.

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It seems that in the main, however, it is the *sovai* of the more recently dead who are thought of as frequenting the village. The mortuary ceremonies are at least in part intended as placations of them; and when all due honours have been paid, the final ceremony, viz. *sirari* (*vide* p. 253), is apparently a means of getting rid of the *sovai*, or inducing it to leave the village for good and all. Thus, for example, at the conclusion of a cycle of mortuary ceremonies in the village of Suporosusu certain paraphernalia of the dance were placed on the raft and floated down the river

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● 775 Opi, and the chief man of the village cried out the names
765 of those deceased for whom the ceremonies had been performed, and bade them go right down to the sea and there turn into *sovai* creatures, naming crocodiles, sharks, and water-snakes. After this, he said, the *sovai* would be 'afraid' to remain in the neighbourhood of Suporosusu.

775 It does not appear that the sea or the sea-shore is commonly regarded as the destination of the *sovai*, but there are, on the other hand, a number of definite localities belonging (sentimentally if not actually) to the various clans, whither their people are supposed to repair after death. Such localities are called *sovai-ta-na* or '*sovai* villages', and almost every one of the clans of the Aiga tribe could name its own. They take the form of some well-defined feature such as a hill, rock, or pool. The *sovai-ta-na* of the Samanahu clan, for instance, is a cluster of large rocks which constitute a small island midstream in the Kumusi. It is worth recording an incident associated with this place. A man was fishing nearby; when he looked up he saw the figure of a woman on the steep bank opposite standing in the conventional posture with staff held in both hands and resting on the head. He cried out to her, but she merely turned aside her head and remained silent. When he had repeated his call with the same result, he suddenly felt that the situation was an uncanny one, and returned precipitately to his village, where he found that a woman had died. No one questions that the man actually saw the woman's *sovai* (it is doubtful, indeed, whether an Orokaiva recognizes the possibility of delusion), and the incident verifies the character of the place. I may note in passing that when I visited these rocks the men who accompanied me showed no reluctance to land on them.

Another example of a *sovai-ta-na* is to be seen in the pool Monoda, which belongs to the clan Eugahu. In reality a stagnant backwater of the Kumusi, Monoda lies secluded amid heavy, dank forest, and is certainly dismal enough for a place of the dead. Natives would not approach the pool too closely, and when we disturbed a snake at our feet they would not interfere with it, but watched it glide rapidly down and disappear in the waters of Monoda itself. Even

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such an incident as this, no doubt, does something to enhance the reputation of a *sovai* village. 715 ●

It is sometimes thought that the *sovai* foregather in these places (which, of course, have no resemblance whatever to the villages of living humans). There is a *sovai-ta-na* not far from the village of Bologasusu named Henjauti, consisting of a large isolated rock some twenty-five or thirty feet in height. When a young man named Patuna, small and not of a very courageous aspect, was recently returning home at dusk, his way took him past Henjauti, where he was horrified to hear the rustling and whispering of *sovai*. The sounds now came from every direction, and Patuna realized that he was surrounded by the *sovai* who inhabited the place, so he made such speed as he could to climb a tree and shouted for help. A body of villagers armed with torches rescued him from what every one thought a very serious predicament; and Patuna subsequently showed me with some pride the tree—about thirty yards distant from the rock—in which he had taken refuge. Some people have actually witnessed or overheard the union of the new *sovai* with the old. It is thought—or we should say sometimes thought—that the *sovai* of those formerly deceased assemble to receive the new *sovai* and bear him away with them. In the valedictory address at the grave he is told to make himself known to them, and to offer them gifts in order to make sure of a cordial welcome (see p. 215). It would seem that the *sovai* is sometimes reluctant to leave the life on earth. Thus listeners at Henjauti have heard the *sovai* of the newly dead weeping; and when a man hidden under a pile of pig-nets heard the *sovai* passing by on their way to Monoda, the new-comer whom they were conducting to the *sovai-ta-na* was protesting and wrangling with his escort. (It may be unnecessary to explain that the man under the pig-nets was a diviner who made a practice of overhearing the conversation of the *sovai* on such occasions in order to discover the identity of the sorcerer who was responsible for the death. He merely imposes on popular belief.)

The Orokaiva does not think of a happy home for the departed. It is true that at the graveside the *sovai* is bidden

● 775 to go to some place of sunshine where there are neither march-flies nor mosquitoes to bother him, but there is no definite idea of where this place is nor of what manner of life the *sovai* may lead there; and the description as far as it goes does not seem to suit the tangible examples of *sovai-ta-na* which I have seen. There are one or two tales of sky-dwellers but no hint of a heaven (though there is the extremely vague belief that some *sovai* go aloft, and are accordingly known as *i-sovai* or 'upper' *sovai*. Among these are the *diroga* or spirits of those slain in fight. It was never suggested, by the way, that these *i-sovai* were in any sense superior to the others.) There is also an interesting tale of the underworld into which a man follows his deceased wife, and finds there a very large population of *sovai*, including some of his relatives. But this, as the native often says, is *hibi*—'only a fairy-tale'.

In short, the only places of the departed which Orokaiva doctrine has definitely formulated are the *sovai-ta-na*; and these are natural features—hills, pools, and the like—which are associated with the several clans. In almost every case they are situated on the land belonging to the clan, and where this is not so it appears probably that they are situated on land which formerly did belong to the clan.

Attitude of Sovai toward the Living

We must lastly consider the mental and moral attitude of the living toward the dead. This will naturally depend upon the attitude which the dead are supposed to hold toward the living, and from what has gone before it will be seen that this latter attitude is of a mixed nature. It is alternately benign and malign, though there is little doubt that the latter is felt to predominate.

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787 I shall first recall evidence that the *sovai* may be well disposed toward the living. The most striking instances are found in their association with magicians, weather experts, and the like. The report on the Taro Cult will be found full of such evidence. The Taro man, who is in effect a spiritual-horticultural expert, most commonly attributes his special powers to one of the dead, who has visited him probably

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in a dream and bequeathed him some instructions or a tangible 'medicine'. Sometimes the healer is in like manner indebted for his gift to a benevolent *sovai*; or the hunting magician may receive from a *sovai* the intelligence that a pig is waiting to be caught. 775 787

But apart from the favours which the *sovai* are supposed to bestow on specialists, we find that every gardener and hunter feels that the dead may send him success. It is true that the negative side of this proposition is more often in evidence, i.e. he is more prone to attribute failure to the displeasure of the *sovai* than success to their favour, but there is, nevertheless, the belief that they are able to make the gardens flourish and to drive the pigs into the pig-nets, and this is proved by the custom of adjuring the *sovai* to do so in the farewell address at the grave. 775

Even in the legends, where the *sovai* usually plays a very villainous part, we occasionally meet with one that is grateful or well disposed to the living. There is, for example, the case of the grateful warrior whose younger brother cared for his children after he had been killed, and who subsequently, in the form of a bird, warned this younger brother of an approaching raid. Nor did his gratitude stop at this, for abandoning his bird-shape he assumed that of a warrior, and held a large number of raiders at bay while his younger brother ran for help. 775 773

But such benevolent conduct on the part of the *sovai* is to say the least unusual, and it must be confessed that on the whole the Orokaiva regards his relatives and friends after their death as enemies. Any failure of the crops may be attributed to them; they may baffle the hunters; they may send the pigs to break through the fences and despoil the gardens. Sickness is perhaps ascribed more often to the malevolence of *sovai* than to any other cause. It is sometimes believed that the *sovai* enter the body in immaterial form, and sometimes that they may cause disease by a mere evil influence, e.g. by touching food. If they are eaten in their animal form sickness invariably follows. We have seen that they have more direct ways of wreaking their ill feelings, and in the guise of monsters they pursue, capture, 775 [153]

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[823] and maltreat their victims. Even general calamities may be ascribed to their malignancy: an earthquake, for instance; is caused by *sovai* travelling underground and presages a general sickness. One may quote the particular instance of Unina. This village used to stand on a flat hill-top, but for many years its inhabitants have been watching the ground crumble away till now their very building-room is threatened. This unfortunate process they ascribe to the malice or vengeance of the *sovai*, with whom they were once unwise enough to do battle in the neighbourhood. The fact that the process of detrition has apparently stopped for the present is said to be due to the intercession of one particular *sovai* who has taken pity on his old village.

It may be granted, then, that the attitude of the *sovai* toward the living is conceived on the whole to be one of malignancy; or it may be more correct to say that the *sovai* are thought of as intensely dangerous, and that besides having powers for good they have also powers for evil, which they are constantly ready to use. What then is the counter attitude of the living toward the *sovai*?

Attitude of the Living toward the Sovai

We must not underestimate the intensity of sorrow which an Orokaiva feels at the death of his relative or friend, and we cannot but suppose that towards the being which he believes so confidently to survive death he still continues to have some feeling of affection. When, for example, the small fragments of tobacco or betel-nut are set on the platform as an offering, or when the *sovai* are called upon to be present and witness the dance, it is not necessary to suppose that those who perform these rites are devoid of any tender feeling for those in whose behalf they are made. But how long such feelings last is another question. The Orokaiva inherits a body of beliefs regarding the *sovai* which picture them in a variety of horrible and dangerous forms, so that he cannot help regarding them with aversion, and especially with fear. His feelings are, therefore, ambivalent, and according to circumstances first one aspect and then the other will take his attention.

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In his general conduct the less kindly emotions are often in evidence. Sometimes they find expression in open hostility, and we find the villagers defying and actually doing battle at night with a host of imaginary foes. Usually, however, it is the anxious endeavour of the living to placate the dead. Therefore we find the offerings of food in the village and in the gardens, and witness the performance of a mortuary ceremony which seems in the main of a placatory nature. Besides these we see the presentation of formal gifts, a handful of costly ornaments offered to the departing *sovai* at the grave-side, or suspended before the door of a house of sickness to induce the *sovai* to discontinue his persecution.

While it is certain that the Orokaiva goes in real fear of the power of the *sovai*, the means of placation often seem peculiarly off-hand. All gifts, as far as I know, are given only to be taken back, or at the most they fall into the hands of the magician or healer who acts, so to speak, as intermediary, and, if the patient recovers, annexes the presents which were ostensibly meant to buy off the *sovai*. There is seldom any deliberate sacrifice of real valuables, as, e.g., by burying them. I may quote what purports to be the true case of an old man who was unable to recall his dog from a hole in which it had pursued some animal. Concluding the dog must have been seized by a *sovai* who lived in the hole, he placed some ornaments at the entrance by way of a bribe, but no sooner did his dog reappear than he snatched up the ornaments and ran for dear life to the safety of his village, the more speedily because he was convinced that he heard the pursuing footsteps of the *sovai*. It is difficult to reconcile such hocus-pocus with the genuine fear of the *sovai* which motivates so much of an Orokaiva's conduct; but whatever form it may take, the act of placation is felt to be necessary and is constantly performed.

Besides the placation of the *sovai* by ceremonial gifts we find some traces of direct appeal or prayer.¹ I do not feel justified in applying this word to the *kasamba*, i.e. the concerted singing of the Taro men (which is described in the 'Taro Cult', pp. 37 ff.), though there is good reason to

¹ Vide further *Orokaiva Magic*, p. 207.

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782 suppose that the now somewhat garbled songs are in origin hortatory. The exhortation, however, is addressed rather to the taro itself or the spirit (*asisi*) of the taro, and I have no definite instance in which the song is addressed to the *sovai*. But the definite instances are not wanting elsewhere. We need go no further than the grave-side address, to which reference has been made so often, where the *sovai* is requested to send pigs to the hunters and prosper the gardens. Again, apart from the ritual *kasamba*, the Taro Cult provides examples of what we may call genuine prayer, when the Taro man in the act of planting calls on the *sovai* of his mother, father, and grandfather to make his taro flourish.

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224 But the most interesting examples are perhaps those connected with hunting. The Aiga villager says that the new moon is the time to set up his *bage*, or pig-trap, and then after dusk he will cry, *sostenuto*, into the darkness of the bush:

Hariga, Hoindapa, Bavari . . . &c.

Moon, Hoindapa, Bavari . . .

Bage etenavara, Hambuto hatijo araikai.

A trap I have set, go, leap on it and break it.

How the moon comes into the prayer I cannot say, for there is nothing in the least resembling a moon cult among the Orokaiva; but the names Hoindapa, Bavari, and the string of place-names that follow are of *sovai-ta-na*, and it is explained that the prayer is addressed to the spirits of the dead who inhabit them. The ensuing words are of course addressed to the pig, telling it to enter the trap to its destruction, and they are no more than an elementary spell in which the hunter utters in words what he wants to happen in fact.

Mr. Flint gives the following account of the same practice as carried out by a hunting party. One of their number is requested to hail the spirits.

'He does so by tapping his throat lightly, and warbling simultaneously. Having aroused the spirits, he calls out vociferously, "We come with our dogs or nets, you send plenty of pigs straight to us." As I was very interested in this alleged communication, I asked my informants if the spirits listened to their talk. I was informed, "Oh, yes, if he did not listen, we would catch no pigs".'¹

¹ *Annual Report, 1924-5, p. 48.*

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Lastly, there are the sporadic instances of the personal and semi-legendary *sovai*, who may be hailed and exhorted to grant a favour or pardon an intrusion. But such direct appeals are of relatively small importance. The aim of the Orokaiva is to appease or to win the favour of the *sovai*, and his regular methods are those of placation by gifts and ritual.

I may now repeat what was written towards the beginning of this chapter, viz. that on the whole Orokaiva religion concerns itself primarily with the spirits of the dead. The *sovai* are viewed as beings both powerful and dangerous, and it behoves the living to keep on the right side of them. It is not to be supposed that an all-embracing philosophy regards the *sovai* as the guiding and controlling spirits of all nature. The native is not urged on by a philosophic inquisitiveness which demands an interpretation for everything. The phenomena of nature are largely taken for granted, and when things are going well he is content to ask no questions. He does not theorize upon the movements of the sun, for instance, and postulate some personal entity—*sovai* or any other—that makes it rise and set. But in the face of calamity or sickness, or any hitch in the course of nature, he may cast about for a cause, some one or something on which to fix the responsibility, and perhaps his favourite scapegoat is the *sovai*. The *sovai*, therefore, are not conceived of as invariably presiding over the course of nature, but rather as being able to influence the course of nature for or against living humans. Further, because of their somewhat malevolent disposition, they are exceedingly prone to the latter kind of interference, so that it is the very essence of Orokaiva religion to placate them.

753 treated by the Taro men. According to the doctrines of their cult certain species of the taro plant were regarded as *koropa*, or 'strong'. To eat them caused illness, and this illness was supposedly due to the presence in the victim's body of the *asisi* of the taro. Nor was it only by eating that the taro *asisi* could be absorbed. If, for example, a man pulled taro from the gardens without first having consulted the *ba-embo*, or Taro man, then the *asisi* of the aggrieved plant would enter into the offender and make him sick. It was then the opportunity of the *ba-embo* in his capacity of doctor to entice the *asisi* back from the patient's body, and so put an end to his sickness.

Sovai Diseases.

753 It will be remembered that among the great majority of
775 the followers of the Taro Cult it was toward the spirit of the dead rather than the spirits of the actual taro plant that all ritual was directed; and accordingly we find that sickness is with them very commonly attributed to the *sovai*. In this the Taro Cult (i.e. the popular form of it) was wholly in keeping with former belief. No agency is more readily made responsible for human illness than are the *sovai*, who are so often regarded as dangerous and spiteful. Remarkable as it may seem, it is especially the *sovai* of close relatives who are blamed for sickness, and they are sometimes thought to enter the bodies of their victims at the actual funeral, when the mourners indulge in the habit of embracing and mauling the corpse. If after such demonstrations—which are in fact inspired by affection—the mourner eats with unwashed hands, or goes to sleep with his hands under his ear for a pillow, he is likely to be entered by the *sovai* and laid up with a sickness. There are many ways—some of them very vaguely conceived—in which the *sovai* may inflict the living with sickness. We hear, for instance, of a man with a swollen jaw who had been 'struck on the mouth' by a *sovai*; another merely ate food which had been cooked over the same fire as the flesh of a *sovai* animal; but in most cases sickness is due to eating the *sovai* in animal or reptile form.

It has been explained that the spirit of the dead may

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assume such a form, viz. that of some creature of the forest or stream (*vide* pp. 269, 272), so that whoever eats snake, cuscus, lizard, and so forth—even bush-pig—does so at a certain risk. The creature may be an ordinary specimen of its kind, or it may be a *sovai*. In the latter event the man who eats it is in all probability stricken down with illness. The exponents of the *Baigona*, or 'snake cult', which had a vogue in the Northern Division some fifteen years ago, made great play with this belief in animal reincarnation. Not only snakes but a great variety of animals and reptiles were held sacred, and fundamentally their sacred character was due to the fact that they were reincarnations of the dead. Any one, therefore, who killed and ate, or even offended one of these creatures, e.g. by neglecting to hail it respectfully, would incur the anger of the *sovai* which it embodied, and fall sick in consequence. Such cases constituted the peculiar province of the *Baigona* healers, who professed to be able to entice the *sovai* out of the sufferer's body. It is not altogether remarkable that although the *Baigona* was practically stamped out as a cult more than ten years ago there should still be practitioners (some of them actually retaining the title of *Baigona*-men) who continue to make use of methods and theories which are so firmly founded on old belief.

Sorcery Diseases.

From diseases caused by malevolent *sovai* we may turn to the last category, viz. that of diseases caused by sorcery.

It cannot be said that there is anything essentially distinctive in the symptoms of sorcery disease, though one may go so far as to say that it is the more mysterious and inexplicable of symptoms which call for this interpretation; and while it is true that when a native's anger or suspicion is aroused he is liable to strike out with a charge of sorcery for even the most trivial affliction, it remains the general rule to impute this cause only for the more serious complaints. Further than this, it is imputed as cause especially for those complaints which cannot be cured. Thus when a doctor has tried his methods on a patient without success he is likely to set the case down as a hopeless one of sorcery

INTRODUCTORY

psychological, as well as its practical, interest will justify a full description.

The method which it is proposed to follow in this report may be briefly explained. Sections II-X will be devoted to a description of the movement; Sections XI and XII will consist of some comments, explanations, and suggestions upon it. The whole subject has proved to be far more complex than it at first appeared. It would not be possible to place one's finger on any particular fact and say, 'This explains everything'. Therefore in the latter part I have drawn attention to a number of considerations of various importance, without claiming that they afford anything like a complete explanation of the phenomena; and in the former part I have endeavoured, even at the cost of some repetition, to make the description as full as possible. This report is not an essay in which the evidence is all strictly relevant to the conclusions. The descriptive part of it will be found rather to outweigh the critical part. But it has been my object, at the risk of tedium, to set down all the information, so that others may be in a position to form their own opinions.

I am much indebted to Mr. Wurth the Resident Magistrate, and to Messrs. Elder and Holland of the Anglican Mission, for the information, the result of long-continued attention to the movement, which they have placed at my disposal, and which has been of considerable value in writing this report.

2. *Summary Description*

It was probably in the year 1911 that a native of Tufi, climbing Mount Victory alone, encountered a snake, and learnt from its mouth some strange facts of life and rules of conduct. Like Moses he went down from the mount unto the people and imparted to them his new knowledge. The snake was named *Baigona* and was, in true accord with the common doctrine of life after death among those people, a reincarnated spirit of the dead. Not only he, but all snakes were henceforward to be

THE TARO CULT

X-794 called *Baigona* and were to be treated with affection and respect. They must be hailed and welcomed whenever they were seen; to kill or eat them was forbidden. 825
 • 775 These taboos extended to a number of other creatures—
 [784] lizards, crocodiles, cuscus, and the like—all of which, in native belief, are commonly the reincarnations of departed spirits.

X-794 The originator of this cult imparted his knowledge of certain medicines, rites, and taboos to others, and this 792
 kind of individual initiation was passed on until there grew up a clique of '*Baigona* men', who might be called priests of the new cult, and who were to be found in villages as far north as the German boundary.

X-794 Meanwhile the horde of ignorant and gullible believers rapidly increased, comprehending little more of the new 754
 order than the general taboo regarding reptiles. The genuine *Baigona* men professed to practise healing, but there was another side to their activities: there is little doubt that they were sorcerers to a man, who held the masses in considerable fear and practised an easy kind of extortion. Together with other methods of professed [786]
 healing they underwent themselves, and induced in their patients, paroxysms of a peculiarly horrible nature. These paroxysms became the general vogue among all who were affected by the cult, and this, together with the practice of sorcery and extortion, led the Government to discourage and suppress the movement. The craft of the *Baigona* men was virtually stamped out ten years ago, though in the interior of the Northern Division there are still to be found regular *Baigona* practitioners who, with a strange amount of confidence in themselves, continue to try their cures upon strangely confident patients. This practice, however, is thought by the natives to be against the law of the Government, and is therefore only in secret. Despite certain effects which it has left on native custom, the *Baigona* cult may be said to have died out. On the whole one is tempted to class it as thoroughly obnoxious.

X-794 It was very soon replaced by another movement,

THE TARO CULT

X 794 The consensus of opinion, however, leads us back to the mouth of the river Mambare, and the name mentioned far more frequently than any other is that of Buninia. It will be noticed that Mr. Chinnery, who wrote soon after the beginning of the movement, names the same person as its originator, so that we may very fairly conclude that the honour of the prophet should belong to him.

X 794 It is interesting to note, however, that although we may be tolerably sure of the identity of the prophet, the 787 accounts of the actual visitation, of the way in which he came under the influence of the Taro, are somewhat 715 varied. According to Chinnery he was, by his own expression, 'struck down' by the 'spirit of the Taro' in his garden at Taututu, on the Mambare, and learnt from the said spirit a new kind of ritual. This ritual was to be practised by the people on pain of the destruction of their garden crops. Mr. Henry Holland, of the Anglican Mission, then at Ambasi, learnt that Buninia had been visited by the spirit of his father, slain in a cannibal raid on the river Kumusi. The slain man, or rather his spirit, travelling northwards in search of his son, had fallen in with a number of other spirits of the dead at Mitre Rock, a solitary and somewhat uncanny fragment standing out to sea by the Mambare mouth. Here they slew a large cuscus and ate it with taro. What was the significance of this ghostly picnic is not altogether apparent, but after it was over the wandering spirit found his son Buninia and revealed to him the elements of a new cult, all of which Buninia kept in his head for a while, and finally revealed in his turn to a very receptive public.

X 794 It is to be feared that there exists no little confusion in the prophet's head as to what really did happen. I will, 787 however, put down the vision which he recounted to me when I met him in 1924. This was in the charming village of Deboi, where he now lives with his colleague Yaviripa, and which is in some respects the head-quarters of the cult. In their polite and friendly fashion the villagers were

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various plant spirits and the forms in which they appeared. Taro (*ba*), banana (*bido*), sugar-cane (*dou*) were men; so also were the ornamental *Handoro* and *Laravi* (the latter being younger brother to the former); the betel-palm (*da*) appeared as a man carrying a lime-pot), the coco-nut (*mutari*) is a woman; various other ornamental or scented plants as young boys.¹ Such a list is too definite and detailed to represent a belief of wide acceptance; various seers see the spirits in various forms, drawing on their own imagination. In questioning the immediate followers of Buninia I heard no mention of a spirit of the dead, i.e. so long as the discussion confined itself to the Taro cult. On the other hand, though making constant reference to the movement in other localities, I heard practically no mention of spirits of the taro until I reached what was really the home or fountain-head of the cult. The one or two isolated allusions which formed the exceptions were made moreover with a conspicuous lack of confidence.

Now the time-honoured religious system of the Orokaiva seems to have its basis on a strong regard for the dead, a complex of affection, respect, and fear. There is a belief in the life after death, though it is not wholly pleasant or comforting to the believer. In fact he thinks little of his own life after his own death, but far more of the after-life of his relatives, who may do so much to prosper or to persecute those who survive them. The dead will haunt the neighbourhood of their homes in a variety of forms, mostly very terrible or horrifying, as those who have seen them will testify, and are known among the different tribes by a variety of names—*binei*, *sovai*, *embakei*, *siango*, &c. There is of course no perfect consistency in native belief on such a matter, though one general doctrine seems common to all the Orokaiva: this is the doctrine of animal reincarnation. After death a man's spirit reappears in the form of some creature—pig, snake,

¹ Certain of the ornamental plants grown in the gardens were pictured as girls. *Tamoni*, e.g., was the 'Sweetheart of the taro'.

● 775 crocodile, cuscus, fire-fly, for example—which haunts the bush, and is regarded as dangerous and, on the whole, abominable, but which must not be offended. It is not necessary to deal at any length with *this subject of animal reincarnation*, which is not relevant to the matter in hand. The spirit of the dead manifests itself in other ways. It may visit the village unseen by human eye; or it may come and stand over the sleeper in his dreams, speak to him, and leave objects of a very tangible nature by his side.

769 The practical aspect of the old-time Orokaiva religion
 775 is largely a placation of the spirits of the dead. It is in the garden that the good results become evident; consequently we find—quite apart from the new cult of Taro—a number of rites or observances which are intended to ensure, through the medium of the spirits of the dead, a greater output in the gardens. The more striking of these observances may be enumerated. In the villages [778] are to be seen the *karan*, or offertory platforms (sometimes with a miniature ladder from the ground which is meant to facilitate the spirit's access to the morsels of decaying food which have been left for it). At the feast and dance the spirit of the dead man in whose honour they are performed is called upon to be present and partake. When a man dies his spirit, accompanied by numerous others, is known sometimes to return almost immediately to his garden to play havoc with the taro in a sort of huff; and, indeed, it is a practice to lie in wait for these ghostly vandals, in the hope that they may be overheard discussing the sorcerer who brought about the death and so permit of identification and revenge. Again, for some reason which was never satisfactorily explained, the garden of the deceased is taboo to his nearest relatives: they fear some malign influence of the spirit upon the vegetables. Lastly, at the actual burial, 769 some old man will stand by the corpse as it lies before the 775 open grave, and pressing with his foot upon that of 764 the dead man as if to secure his attention will cry out,

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'Begone now to a good place, not an ill one; a place where there are no march flies nor mosquitoes; where there are pigs in plenty, and taro in plenty. Send us pigs, and send us taro, and we will make thee a feast'. Instances such as these will show that the native believes his food supply to be governed, or at least influenced, by the spirits of the dead, and that accordingly he has at least one practical reason for seeking their goodwill. It may be said definitely that, before the advent of the Taro cult, the Orokaiva looked to the spirits of his dead for the prosperity of his garden, not to the spirits of the taro itself.

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It is necessary to consider briefly the native conception of a 'spirit'. The words *bini*, *sovai*, &c. (p. 25) stand generally for the being which in one form or another continues to exist after the death and burial of the body. It includes rather than coincides with the word 'ghost', as it covers a variety of conceptions, from the unseen and unsubstantial entities who climb the little ladders and dine imperceptibly upon the food offerings, to the reincarnated animals and reptiles of the forest or stream, or further, to the indescribable monsters who abduct men and women, scatter their wits, and leave them to wander in the bush. But all these conceptions have this much in common, that they belong to the life after death.

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Now the Taro cult has spread abroad another word, *atiti*; or rather it has added a new meaning to this word. Aiga informants and others far removed from the original home of the cult sometimes nowadays use the word *atiti* as synonymous with the being who survives death. But in the Orokaiva tongue *atiti* stands for shadow, reflection, or the mere appearance of anything, be it dead or alive. It does not necessarily imply death, nor does it cover the same vivid concept as *sovai* or *bini*. The new use of the word arises from a misunderstanding. It is acknowledged to belong, in this sense, to the Taro vocabulary, i.e. to a set of terms which have been made popular by the new cult and are used freely by those who only half understand them (vide pp. 39, 48). Buninia dreamed

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- 775 that he met the *atiti* of the taro plant: those who have
192 since been infected by the cult dream, or profess to dream, that they meet their ancestors or deceased relatives. But they sometimes employ the new word *atiti* (simply because it is fashionable) instead of the old words *binei*, *sovai*, *embaki*, &c. The later converts grasped the word, but failed to grasp the idea. Buninia's conception of taro spirits seems hardly in keeping with popular belief; consequently it made but little headway. While the practices or ritual of the cult offered peculiar attractions to the masses, the somewhat new-fangled doctrine was unconsciously rejected, or, more accurately, relapsed into the old form.

X 794 A few instances may illustrate the close association
787 between the Taro cult and the dead. A Taro man of note
775 is taking the leading part in a garden ceremony, which
244 consists principally in treating the taro with medicines, and which is accompanied by the invariable feasting and singing. In the songs he acts as choragus or *vorsänger*, and the repeated theme of them is 'Father, give me Taro'. He calls on his father, one Sireri, by name to stand by in the bush and witness the dancing and conviviality which is going forward in the village. He describes to me how from time to time he is visited by his dead parent. Lying down to sleep he leaves a plate of taro by his side. Presently Sireri comes and eats a little, as much as a rat might nibble, for instance, and then gives his son a leaf called *Moso* for taro medicine, telling him to leave a fragment in the hole where the taro-top is to be planted. The dreamer does not see his father but hears his voice, and then wakes to find the leaf of *Moso* in his hand.

X 794 Another Taro man tells how he acquired his knowledge
787 from his brother-in-law, named Panjari. Panjari had been
775 visited in his sleep by the *sovai* of his father and mother. They had taken him away with them to the *sovai-ta-na*, or 'the ghost village', and there given him taro medicine and pig medicine, with instructions how to use them for

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his success in gardening and hunting. Panjari awoke from his sleep with these medicines, or at least the knowledge of them, in his possession, and in due course had passed them on to my informant. But the disciple cuts no ice without an inspiration of his own; so my informant in his turn receives dream visits from his own parents, and together they go into the gardens by night to beat the drums and sing, to make *tinogu*, as they call it, amid the taro. Another old man of the same village, anxious to bear out the evidence of his friend, declared he had heard this mysterious *tinogu*, and had screwed up his courage to the point of investigating it: before he came near enough to see the performers, however, they had taken flight and scattered. That the dead drummers were really in the garden is hardly more improbable than that a native should have ventured to investigate anything so spookish. But both stories, although hovering strangely between belief and fantasy, indicate that the concern of the Taro man is here with the spirits of the dead, not of the taro. So, again, we hear a Taro man crying as he holds up the shoot before planting,

Aiaka, mamaka, apijs
Mother, father, grandfather
Ba nato kando-gumbu
taro mine bring
Durate bureda piata unani
Set down in the garden, grant.

And we see, in the *ba oro*, or meeting-houses of the Taro men, little racks or platforms with food offerings, which they tell you are for the spirits of the dead. Lastly, in his subsidiary role of doctor, we see the Taro man, having practised all his remedies to no avail, setting up a spear with a bundle of rich ornaments for a placatory offering to the *sovai* who is afflicting the patient.

Such instances could easily be multiplied, but these are enough to show the trend which Taro medicine has taken. The original doctrine of the taro spirit seems to have survived principally in the neighbourhood of the

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X 794³⁰ Mambare mouth and at a few points along the coast.
 ● 175 Elsewhere, so far as my own investigations go, it has been diverted into the old well-worn channels of primitive Orokaiva belief. At Bakumbari, a coastal village not far south of the Kumusi, an informant explained, in the usual way, that he had been possessed by, and had received the Taro from, his dead father. He seemed totally ignorant of the idea of possession by the *ba atiti*, and when asked whether his ideas were the same as Buninia's on the matter, answered that 'he knew nothing of Buninia's teaching'. In Buninia's village the question of Taro orthodoxy came up for discussion. Yaviripa, who is a more alert and observant man than Buninia, knew well enough that other people did not see eye to eye with him. He did not deny that they might be possessed by the spirits of their dead, but he said that they were not true Taro men. He apparently found no serious cause for complaint in that the teaching of the originators had been misunderstood; but what made him really indignant was that some people to whom they had 'given the Taro' should say that 'Buninia and Yaviripa really saw the spirits of the dead when they thought they saw the spirits of the taro'. Buninia dismissed the matter shortly by saying these others were liars.

It has been necessary to deal at length with this adaptation to old belief, and to discuss the matter at this stage in the report in order to prevent the confusion which would arise unless these differences of doctrine were made clear. It is not that any violent schism divides orthodox from unorthodox: doctrine is with the native a matter of less importance than practice, and the general practice of the Taro cult has remained the same. We may therefore proceed to examine the cult as a whole, and without troubling ourselves upon this difference of belief among its votaries, viz. as to whether their inspiration comes from, and their worship is due to, the spirits of the taro or the spirits of the dead.

756 second category, viz. those caused by the spirits, that
753 the Taro doctor is best qualified to deal. That the spirits
of the dead may afflict their surviving friends with illness
is an old Orokaiva doctrine; that the spirits of the taro
can do the same is presumably a new doctrine, associated
only with the new cult.

TS3 The native goes in real fear of his dead relatives and
775 in perpetual anxiety lest he should offend them and incur
[784] their displeasure. This is probably the reason why a dead
man's garden is taboo to his relatives: they fear he may
infect the products of it out of sheer malice. If a man ate
a banana which a *binei* had touched he would fall ill; so
also if he ate one of the *binei* animals, i.e. one on which the
dead was reincarnated; or, indeed, if he merely neglected
the offerings and the observances which are due to the
dead.

X-794 In the doctrines of the new cult it was maintained that
753 a man might give offence to the actual taro spirit, and be
776 punished by it with a sickness. Thus there were certain
784 varieties of taro, perfectly wholesome, which were made
taboo to the layman of the new cult. They were called
koropa, or strong, and he ate them at the risk of illness.
So again, according to Buninia and Yaviripa, taro might
not be pulled without first consulting the Taro men. The
taro spirits would be angry with one who was so dis-
respectful as to break this rule, and would enter into him
and lay him up with a sickness.

It is not fair to pester a native for definite explanations
of abstrusities. The dead or the taro may *influence* for
evil the rash or irreverent, and this influence is felt to be
a kind of spiritual possession. Just as the taro spirit may,
in the accredited Taro man, be a fund of power, so in the
layman who has rashly or ignorantly offended, it may be
a source of sickness. We can only say that the native's
conception of spiritual possession is not less hazy than
our own.

755 The methods of the doctor are in the main directed
towards freeing the patient from the evil influence. The

SECTS OF THE TARO AND VARIANT CULTS 69

Mr. Holland informs me that the Spear men were first noticed by one of his teachers at Ambasi, near the Opi mouth. Since then the movement has spread very widely in the Dobodura and Wasida districts, but we may remember that it appears to have had its origin farther north and nearer the fountain-head of the Taro cult.

The word *diroga*, common in one form or another to all the Binandele dialects, bears a number of meanings. The fundamental idea is 'pertaining to the spirit of a slain man'. In districts into which the new *Diroga* cult has not penetrated, and where it is quite unknown, the word is nevertheless used for the 'spirit or ghost of the slain'. Among the various shifting conceptions of the life after death there is one (tolerably uniform) that the spirit of a man slain in battle differs from the spirits of those who succumb to sorcery or sickness. It has always this distinctive quality, that it travels aloft, not on the earth or in the water: it may take the typical forms of fruit-bat, fire-fly, or meteor; and it may be heard whistling or piping as it flits overhead in the darkness.

One or two other meanings are probably derivative. *Diroga* may stand for the *pona* or feast made by the relatives of a man killed in fight. Secondly, as Mr. Elder states, 'the word means vengeance or punishment'. The connexion is obvious: never a man was killed among the Orokaiva but his relatives thought of revenge.

Now the *Diroga* man, like most other Taro men, is possessed by a spirit of the dead; but it is invariably the spirit of one who was slain. That is to say, a *Diroga* man is so called because he is possessed by a *diroga*. The difference is fully recognized by leading votaries of the newer cult. They point out that one who is possessed by the spirit of the taro itself or by that of a man who has died 'in his bed' may indeed be a Taro man, but he has not the qualification necessary for a *Diroga* man. One or two examples will make this qualification clear. A man

* *Diroga* (with a capital D) will stand for the *Diroga* cult; *diroga* for the spirit of the slain man.

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 named Baiho was attacked by fever; he bathed, but his fever continued; then he was seized with *jipari*. He did not understand his plight until a certain *Diroga* man explained it to him. His father Parata had been killed long ago in a raid by hostile neighbours: now the *diroga* of Parata was possessing him. Subsequently Baiho received a dream-visit from his slain father, and was presented with a certain kind of Taro named *Orori*.

Another man witnessing the dancing of a party of *Diroga* men, found himself under the influence of the shaking-fit. It was explained to him that the *diroga* of his slain brother was causing the trouble, an interpretation which a subsequent dream verified beyond question.

Another informant, possessed by the spirit of his father, likewise a true *diroga*, saw the figure of the slain man standing before him with his hands behind his back, just as the corpse of the victim is set upright with its hands bound to a pole behind it. Such instances could be multiplied. The *Diroga* man believes, or professes, with absolute consistency as far as my inquiries go, that he is possessed by the true *diroga* or spirit of a slain man.

X 794
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 One or two of their peculiar mannerisms may find explanation in the conception of the *diroga* itself. It used to be their habit to strike postures, looking up into the sky or into the tree-tops. This was where they hoped or pretended to see the *diroga*, who always fly overhead. A recruiter informed me that the thrusting and jabbing with spears was directed at the spirits, which may be so, though I have no verification. One characteristic gesture of the *Diroga* man is a sideways jerk of the head such as a bather makes when he wishes to shake the water out of his ear. A native has given me a somewhat grisly explanation. An *emi tataru*, i.e. one who has been done to death with the terrible *emi* or disk club, will, in his immaterial *diroga* form, be continually jerking his head to one side to clear away the blood which is clogging his ears. There is a tale, as pathetic as it is gruesome, of a lad who left his sweetheart to go with his fathers and

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brothers on a raid, telling her to wait for his home-coming, when he would marry her. In due time he came back to the girl's house, far ahead of the others, to tell her that the raiders had been victorious and to take her away to his home. As they set off he bade her go in front, but looking over her shoulder the girl saw him jerking his head and stamping his foot, and finally noticed a trickle of blood from his ear. At that she became alarmed, left her husband on the track, and ran back to the village where she found the raiders bringing in his corpse. Real *diroga* jerk their heads, so should not *Diroga* men do the same? 794X
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The dance of the *Diroga* men has already been described (p. 20). With its swift advance and retreat, its dodging and sallying, and its truculent, threatening air, the performance seems to reproduce the attack of the fierce Orokaiva warrior. No native has offered an explanation, but it seems that the warlike nature of the dance is supposedly due to the possession of the dancers by warrior spirits. 794X
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The spears have become an emblem of the *Diroga* cult. Many, if not all of them, are found to bear personal names—the names in fact of the actual *diroga* which possess their owners. They are in fact symbols of the dead warriors. It is said, indeed, that 'the spears are men'. This makes clear the practice of gripping or stroking the spear-point. The universal hand-shaking of Taro men has been referred to. With *Diroga* men it is customary to touch their spear-points as well as to shake them by the hand: this, I am told, is a salutation to the *diroga* which is symbolized by the spear. If a man neglect this observance he may fall sick, because he has offended the *diroga*. 794X
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It has been said that the profession of curing is more pronounced among the *Diroga* men than among the ordinary followers of the Taro cult. The methods are, however, the same as those previously described, with special emphasis on the use of the spear (p. 60). With 794X
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SECTS OF THE TARO AND VARIANT CULTS 77

a feature of this as of the Taro cult. Since the establishment of the Mission Station at Manau (and later at Duvira) by Mr. S. R. M. Gill, the *jipari* has died out.

One of the important beliefs of the Manau prophets was that the *embo betari*, i.e. the dead, were coming back to visit their living friends. Dasiga had seen in a dream a fleet of steamers and canoes filled with spirits of the dead and cruising off shore at night-time. Bia, and subsequently two other men of Sanananda (another village in which the Manau cult took hold), were favoured with the same vision. But at this distance it is not easy to discover the early tenets of the Manau faith: they are probably confused in the memories even of its foremost exponents. This is especially apparent in the matter of Kekesi, the powerful spirit who watched over Mitre Rock near the Mambare mouth. Although Mr. Chinnery could elicit a circumstantial account of Kekesi, his steamer *Kesi*, and his association with the rites of Manau, yet, after only ten years, the association seems to have been forgotten. I heard no mention of Kekesi at Manau. To this farrago of Christianity at Manau contributions must have come from the long-established but distant Anglican stations at Ambase and St. Andrews, and from the Lutheran station at Morobe; and no doubt some of the aping of European habits was introduced by ex-police and indentured labourers. Nowadays, I believe, the village is wholly Christian.

11. *The Causes of the Taro Movement*

The observed facts of the Taro cult having been dealt with it is now permissible to adopt a more critical or explanatory method. Its origin and dissemination have already been treated descriptively. In this section I propose to reconsider these questions and offer certain comments.

Cultural Mutations. The Taro cult followed so closely on the *Baigona* cult that it is commonly said to have 'taken its place' when the latter was suppressed. There is, it is true, a very wide difference between their respective

APPENDIX

(Extract from a letter from Rev. E. Raff, Vila, New Hebrides)

10th Jan. 1924.

794 On Santo, one of the largest and the most northerly island of this group, we have had an outbreak of insanity very similar to that in the Gulf Division of Papua. Some years ago several 'prophets' arose and caused great unrest among the people prophesying a flood in which only the elect, i.e. their 'paid up' followers, would be saved and promising resurrections and a ship from Sydney filled with rice and trade goods.

[792] A large house was built to receive these goods and on one occasion the people nearly took possession of a recruiting schooner in the belief that their ship had arrived. Every passing sail aroused great excitement and fire-signals from the anxious watchers posted on the beach. Emissaries of the chief prophet travelled far and wide over Santo and enrolled hundreds, perhaps thousands, who paid first pigs and later money, 5s. to £1, for the privilege and the promised benefits. In one quarter the plantation boys were convinced of the truth of the prophet's assertions, because, though he had never been to school, he could write 'language belong white man'. In evidence they produced a piece of paper scrawled with unintelligible marks.

794 Some of the natives heard that Ronovuro, the chief prophet, had raised a dead cow and at one of the 'sing sings' (dances) a follower who fell down 'dead' was promptly revived. But the promised resurrections were postponed time and time again, and at last it was given out that the 'whites' who were the cause of most deaths (except old age) on Santo were also preventing the resurrections and the cry became 'Santo for the Santoese' and ideas arose about driving out the whites.

794 Credence was given to this idea by an old story which became very popular. This old story told how, when at last a noted native murderer was done to death, all his victims came to life. The natural deduction was 'Kill the whites who have caused the deaths and the dead shall arise'. About sixteen months ago I was on Santo and things were then in a dangerous condition.

794 The culmination was a tragedy which occurred on the 24th of July of last year. Ronovuro was holding a great 'sing sing' at the conclusion of which the resurrections were to take place. 715 Probably it was decided then that the Europeans were to die. 674 A half-caste visited this 'sing sing' and was recognized by Ronovuro

2: Williams E, G-5 (1923-1925) 1928

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as his deceased son. The resurrection bodies were to be white
skinned. The half-caste did not appreciate his adoption and took the
first opportunity for flight. In the middle of the 'sing sing' Ronovuro's wife died and when all attempts to raise her to life failed, he declared that a planter named Clapcott was the cause and must be killed before she would come to life. Five men were sent to shoot this planter, who was an inoffensive man, deaf and in a very lonely place. He was shot, his body mutilated and parts of it eaten. The sequel to the tragedy was that six men were condemned, three including Ronovuro were executed, three were reprieved, and a number of other natives are in prison for sharing in the loot. There is a good probability that now the ringleader is out of the way the madness will soon disappear.

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THE MAGICAL SPECIFIC

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The specific may be in itself a very harmless ordinary object, but it has a supernatural potency. In discussing the reliance of the magic-maker upon the unknown and the supernatural we find ourselves approaching a somewhat different region of magic, viz. the kind of magic which acts through the medium of supernatural agencies of a personal character. It is only for strict definition to decide whether we have already stepped over the borderline which separates magical from religious phenomena, or whether we must wait till we detect a supplicatory attitude before we are entitled to use the latter term. At any rate this kind of magic, in which supernatural agencies of a personal nature are employed, is of comparatively rare occurrence among the Orokaiva. 789

Where it does occur it seems that we might almost bring it into line with the sort of magic we have been discussing, save that for the implicit appeal to the specific there is substituted a direct appeal to some supernatural agent of a personal, i.e. a spiritual, character. In some cases the procedure may be perfected and over and above it all the magic-maker may appeal to some spirit as an extra safeguard of success, just as he employs the impersonal but mysteriously potent specific. Thus we hear of a man who has made cold-weather magic with the customary symbolism and has the mixture ready in a bamboo 'bottle'. But then he would shake the bottle and say, 'Go on, go on, burn down the house of my enemy!' The predestined victim piles on fuel incautiously against the cold, the fire flares up, his house catches light and is burnt to the ground. The exhortations of the sorcerer were addressed, as I was told, not to his mixture in the 'bottle', but to the *sovai*, or ghost, of the man whom he was avenging. And this man, who had been speared by the owner of the burnt house, was thus enlisted to compass his own revenge.

Magic through the medium of spiritual agency seems to be the special province of the *Baigona* men and the Taro men, i.e. the exponents of the two cults which have 789
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789 at different times acquired a great vogue among the
754 Orokaiva. The *Baigona* men were visited by the spirits
775 of the dead, and had dealings with them particularly in
that reptilian form which the dead frequently take in
Orokaiva theory. It was only necessary for the *Baigona*
man to look at or name his victim, and the spirit who was
in league with him would in some hardly understood
manner effect the damage. Similarly the Taro men could
punish any who gave them offence by means of the spirit
of the dead (or in some cases the spirit of the taro itself)
by which they were possessed. The followers of *Diroga*,
a variant of the Taro cult, could figuratively 'spear' their
enemies. The spears were emblems or personifications of
slain warriors, and it was only necessary for the *Diroga*
man to adjure his spear to go forth and strike, and the
victim would be down with an illness.

Such cases as these represent a phase of occult practice
which is somewhat apart from the subject under debate.
I have no very definite information upon it, and this is
in no small degree due to the fact that native ideas are
themselves more than a little vague. The spirits of the
dead are made the objects of many emotions, but perhaps
predominantly of fear. Of themselves they can prosper
their surviving relatives or they can visit them with sick-
ness and death. They are constantly placated in public
rites, so what wonder if the individual sorcerer should
call upon or be supposed to call upon them to further his
own private designs?

6. Good and Bad Magic

789 It has not hitherto been necessary to draw any distinc-
754 tion between the two classes of magic which may be
called black and white. In face of the difficulty of defining
the term 'magic' one of the most satisfactory solutions
is to limit it to the nefarious and disreputable category.
However, for the purposes of the present report this
solution has not been adopted, and 'magic' has been
made to stand for all those primitive practices, good or

754 one of the friends of the deceased. While the brand con-
 787 tinues to burn, this man lightly jerks the string, uttering
 the names meanwhile of all those likely sorcerers who
 may have been guilty in the case under investigation.
 Suddenly the brand falls and is extinguished, and the
 name which was mentioned at the crucial moment is that
 of the culprit. It is not difficult to suppose that a little
 extra vigour in the pull, conscious or unconscious, might
 lead to the victimization of an innocent man who for some
 reason was in the bad books of the diviners. When, as
 is sometimes supposed, the brand takes flight through
 the bush in the hand of the ghost and is traced to the
 house of the guilty man, it is equally possible for the
 same sort of abuse to enter into the experiment. Nothing
 is commoner than a dead brand or a few lumps of char-
 coal on a man's verandah, and this kind of divination
 might find almost any one guilty. Indeed, there is a
 possibility of foul play on the part of the diviners. As
 Mr. Beaver observed, 'Unfortunately for the psychic value
 of the proceedings, I understand the imprint of a human
 hand may often be discovered on the charred wood'.¹

754 An incident in my own experience illustrates another
 787 well-known method and will serve to show how much of
 suspicion, preconception, or even spite there may be in
 • 775 what appears a sincere attempt at divination. Among the
 824 Orokaiva's somewhat vague and ill-assorted ideas of the
 life after death there is this, that shortly after a man's
 decease his ghost may take the form of the bird *kombu*.
 The *kombu* is a bird of black plumage, seldom seen, and
 has for some reason acquired a character of uncanniness.
 Its usual cry is one of four syllables and is said to be
Kau, kau, kombu! but evidently the bird has a way of
 varying its call, and one may expect by paying careful
 attention to hear it pronounce the name of the sorcerer
 who brought its human existence to an end. A number
 of different examples would argue a greater power of
 vocal expression than any untaught bird could well

¹ *Loc. cit.*

THE FEAR OF MAGIC

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possess, and they are hardly to be explained on any hypothesis save that a man often hears just what he expects to hear. In the instance of which I am speaking the friends of the deceased, one Handau, had on several recent occasions heard the early morning cry of the *kombu* on the outskirts of the village. It had said unmistakably *Ohusa!* and *Samberota!* sometimes the one, sometimes the other. Two of the mourning relatives approached me in the clandestine manner which the weirdness and gravity of the matter seemed to warrant, and suggested that I rise before daybreak on the next morning, when it would be possible, by hearing the *kombu* itself, to verify what they said. 754 787 775 824

At dawn of the following day the awakening birds were uttering their various calls when I took a seat in the centre of the village together with the two informants, who were listening in a state of highly strung expectancy for the ghostly bird to repeat its message. We had hardly composed ourselves for the event when the solitary rooster of a neighbour, not ten yards away, fairly split the welkin with a cry as nearly resembling *Samberota!* as any bird short of a parrot could have uttered. Yet this loud crowing of the cock did not seem to attract the attention of my companions, or if it did was looked on only as an annoying interruption. Their attention was focused on the voice of the *kombu*, discernible among the increasing babel of notes at perhaps one hundred yards' distance. It was uttering a cry of four syllables the last of which seemed occasionally to be cut off, so that I felt bound to say they framed the words *Samberota* and *Ohusa* as well as any other. 754 787

Encouraged by this verification my informants explained that Handau, some time before his death, had visited a somewhat distant part and lived for a day or two in the house of *Ohusa*. The purpose of his visit to the place had been to set up a pig-trap of the kind called *samberota*. It was true, they admitted, that this kind of pig-trap was usually known as *bagi*. But *Bagi* happened